THE Reconstructionist

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REALITIES AND VALUES

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the Reconstructionist

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LAWRENCE CROHN is a prominent and active worker in Jewish communal affairs in Detroit, Michigan.

ABRAHAM SEGAL is active in the Jewish educational field in Philadelphia and teaches at the Germantown Jewish Community Center.

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EDITORIALS

RESTORING JEWISH PROPERTY

ANTI-SEMITISM has become intensified in France partly because returning Jewish citizens have, naturally, asked that their businesses and property be restored to them, the rightful owners. The business and property of French Jews had been "sold" to French non-Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators or by the fleeing Jews themselves, and the purchasers now claim that they made the purchases in "good faith" and for a legal "consideration"; that is, that they had paid good French coin for what they now have and refuse to relinquish. They admit that, in some instances, they paid less than full value, because the sale was obviously a "forced sale"; but they argue that it was not the purchase that hurt the Jews, for the Jews were compelled to liquidate their resources, and if the French non-Jews had not purchased the businesses and properties, these would have fallen into a state of abandon, or would have been wrecked and ruined by the Nazis, by vagrants and hoodlums, by weather and time.

Two things are apparent to the returning Jews: (1) they are penniless, while their businesses and properties are being enjoyed by others; (2) if they want to resume life in their former towns, cities and villages, they cannot press their claims on the basis only of law or principles of justice, for they must live with the people against whom they have claims (and who for years were exposed to Nazi propaganda), and must avoid making bad matters worse.

The French situation is no different from that found in other parts of Europe. It was recently reported that the Bulgarian cabinet had been considering this problem and had approved a law containing the following provisions:

1. Sales of Jewish property are declared invalid, and the property reverts to the former owners. The government will compensate the purchasers for losses suffered by them, if the property was purchased directly from the government.

2. Stimulated sales of Jewish property during the period of Nazi domination, which were made to avoid confiscation, are considered lawful and the *status quo* will not be disturbed.

3. Agricultural holdings will be returned to Jews only if they personally

cultivated the land prior to confiscation.

4. Pharmacies taken from Jewish owners will be returned to them.

It is difficult to see why the restoration of Jewish property is hedged about by so many restrictions or conditions. Why should the government compensate the purchasers for losses suffered by invalidation of the "sales" only if the purchases had been made from the government itself? Suppose it had been made from the Jewish owner, who was just one day ahead of the Nazi invaders. What difference should it make that the Jewish owner of a farm did not himself cultivate the land?

It seems to us that the only feasible and fair solution is for the government (French, Bulgarian, or any other) to restore to the Jewish owners their businessses and properties without condition. The Jews should make arrangements with the government to pay to it (allowing a reasonable period of time) the consideration they had received for the "sales," and the government should compensate the purchasers for their losses. The question of losses should be determined by a special government agency, which should take into consideration profits made by the purchasers, the value of the use of the property between purchase and restoration, and other relevant matters. The aim should be to restore both the Jews and non-Jews to their *status quo ante*. We would emphasize that, just as it is important that Jewish property be restored, even so is it important, in order to avoid an intensification of anti-Semitism, that losses to the non-Jewish purchasers be avoided.

These, we believe, should be the principles upon which the governments should proceed. But in every instance responsible Jewish leaders should be consulted, so that extraordinary situations might be met by the exercise of discretion, after consultation and deliberation. Property rights must be restored to the Jews of Europe; but only in such a way that the cure will not be said to be worse than the disease. Justice, in this case, must not be the blindfolded goddess; both her eyes must be open, and she must look to the future as well as to the past.

REEDUCATION TO ERADICATE ANTI-SEMITISM

ASSOCIATE Justice Frank Murphy, who is chairman of a national committee to combat anti-Semitic propaganda, appeals in a recent article in "Liberty Magazine" for 100,000,000 volunteers to carry on the fight "in every home, farm, factory, union, church and school, in the press and on the air." He deems such an extensive counter-propaganda necessary because "the seeds of Nazism and anti-Semitism will rise to plague us long after the German High Command has been forced to surrender." Anti-Semitism he considers a menace to the nation because, although the first victims of anti-Semitism would be Jews, "hate-maddened people would turn on a second minority and then on a third. Each of us in America is a minority in some way or other."

This appeal is timely and necessary. Justice Murphy does well in calling attention to the wide front on which the battle against anti-Semitism must be waged. To stress the role of anti-Semitism in the Nazi scheme of world domination and to use that as a talking-point against anti-Semitism is effective counter-propaganda.

But even Justice Murphy's candid appraisal of the dangers of anti-Semitism and of the need for radical and energetic efforts to uproot it does not envisage all that must be done to render

America immune to its influence. We wonder where Justice Murphy will be able to find 100,000,000 mature men and women who are themselves free from the germ of anti-Semitism to a sufficient degree to administer treatment to those infected by it. We do not mean to imply that most Americans are in sympathy with Hitler's attitude to the Jews, or would countenance the methodic cruelty of his war of extermination against them. But many persons are carriers of the germ of anti-Semitism without themselves being aware that they have been infected, and without exhibiting any of the more pronounced symptoms of that mental malady. To apply antiseptics to the foci of infection is not enough; we must immunize the blood-stream of the American organism against invasion by the anti-Semitic virus. Valuable as is the counter-propaganda proposed by Justice Murphy, it will fail of success, unless we also apply a long-range educational program that strikes at the cultural roots of anti-Semitism. All Christendom needs as radical a reeducation to enable it to live at peace with the Jews, as the German nation needs in order to enable it to live at peace with its neighbors.

For traditional doctrines of the Christian churches are mainly responsible for fixing in the mind of the Western world the picture of the Jew as the cosmic villain of history, the Christ-killer, the anti-Christ; and as long as the Orthodox Christian mythology is taught as literally or even symbolically true in all its details, anti-Semitism will remain incurable. This is not said in bitterness or resentment, but in the belief that, if Christians were but made truly aware of the origin of their morbid Judaeophobia, such a psychoanalytic approach would go a great way toward ridding them of that malady.

This is how anti-Semitism came to permeate the culture of Christendom. In order to establish the Messianic claims of Jesus to be the redeemer, and savior of mankind, Christianity had to assign an important historic role to the Jewish people, for the prophecies on which those claims rested were contained in the Scriptures of the Jews. It had to teach, as did the Synagogue, that God had "chosen" the Jewish people. At the same time the Church had to account for the fact that the Jewish people did not and do not now regard Jesus as the Messiah and certainly not as, in any unique sense, the son of God. This led to the doctrine that God forsook the Jewish people when they rejected Jesus, and that He then chose the Church as representing the true Israel. The Church, in its teaching, never stressed the Jewishness of Jesus, because it regarded him as a divine person transcending all geographical and historical conditioning; but it did stress the Jewishness of Judas and made him a symbol of Israel, for it was hard for Christians to understand how Jews should have denied the divinity of Jesus unless they were anti-God.

The whole status of the Jews in the Middle Ages, when the Church dominated Western culture, is explicable in terms of the role of anti-Christ assigned by the Church to the Jewish people. As deicides the Jews were considered a subhuman people who were suffered to exist only that they might testify by their abject status to the glory of the Church. True, the Church often protected them from the violence of mobs. But it was the Church that stamped upon them the stigma of inferiority, and a stigma of inferiority always functions as an invitation to violence.

In modern times the process of secularization and a growing skepticism concerning religious dogmas have considerably shaken the belief in the traditional doctrines of the churches, but have left

unchanged the revulsion against the Jewish people which the ancient myths inspired. Modern anti-Semitism has rationalized Jew-hatred by a new secular mythology which takes over from the old the notion that the Jews are a corrupt race, the villain of the drama of history. But since they have cast off the moral inhibitions of the Judeo-Christian ethical tradition, and have no need of the Bible to validate their own pretensions to being a superior race, the Nazis are not content with persecuting and defaming the Jews, but insist on exterminating them.

American Christians who are shocked at the anti-Semitic excesses of the Nazis owe it to themselves to take stock of the teachings of their respective churches, to reinterpret their Scriptures and to revise their rituals to the end that the adoration of Jesus shall not imply condemnation of the Jews or of Judaism for denying his divinity. Unless they can teach that Jews can find salvation through their Torah as readily as Christians can find it through their worship of Christ, they will be continuing to breed anti-Jewish prejudice and to be responsible for abetting anti-Semitism.

Are we making an excessive demand on the churches? We admit that we are calling for a drastic revision of traditional attitudes in the interest of democracy, peace, and good will. But we are not asking of Christians more than what we ask of our own people; we are not trying to remove the mote from our brother's eye and ignoring the beam in our own. We find the traditional Jewish belief in Israel as God's chosen people objectionable from the viewpoint that all religions are equally manifestations of man's quest for God and that God is equally near "to all who call upon Him in truth." We have accordingly advocated the elimination of all references to the doctrine of the choice of Israel from our liturgy. And just as we are confident that Jewish religion will be purified and strengthened by such modifications of its doctrine and ritual, so we sincerely believe that the Christian churches have nothing to lose and much to gain by a corresponding revision of their doctrine and ritual. For in this way they would rid themselves of the burden of guilt for the murderous hatred against the Jews throughout the ages which they have diretly or indirectly inculcated.

A RENAISSANCE OF FRENCH JEWRY

FRENCH Jewry prepares for its renaissance just as France enters, once again, the ranks of the United Nations. This is a happy coincidence, though it is no accident, for the new France is the France of religious freedom, of liberalism; and only in such a France can Judaism come back to life.

Among the representatives to the World Jewish Conference were four delegates from France, headed by M. Leon Meiss, president of the Jewish Consistory and of the Representative Council of the Jews of France. In his public utterances, he stressed the need for restoring Jewish community life. This he conceives not in the narrow terms of relief and charity, but in the broader terms of religion and culture. M. Meiss looks forward to the revitalization of French Jewish life along the lines of American Jewish life, with which he seems to have been "impressed."

Whether M. Meiss was being gallant like a Frenchman, or merely naive because of unfamiliarity, we cannot say; but we certainly hope that the cultural development both of France and of America will be more impressive in the future than it has been in the past. The truth is, we believe, that French Jewry may, indeed, in the words of M. Meiss,

"be on the verge of a new development." For one thing, French Jews have suffered sufficiently to realize that the former cleavage between the older residents and the "immigrants, or foreign Jews" is a thing of the past. Both kinds have been in concentration camps together. They understand that the truly urgent problems of Jewry are common to all Jews, and that unity is therefore necessary. That realization alone puts them far ahead of some other Jewries we might mention.

In addition, French Jews have seen the utter destruction of their synagogues and their libraries. American Jews probably cannot visualize such an eventuality in their lives; they cannot, therefore, know what has been the spiritual effect of this vast carnage upon the minds and souls of the French Jews. But Americans can infer, from what M. Meiss and his colleagues say, how it has come about that French Jewry has acquired a new awareness of Judaism. When the libraries are there for anyone to visit, when the Synagogues are there to be attended whenever one happens to feel in the mood, they merge with the scenery, and are scarcely noticed. Taken for granted, they are gradually neglected.

Then comes war, and pillage and vandalism—and a new awakening to the beauties and the moral inspiration of books and prayer. The enemy is driven back, an achievement in which the Jewish maquis played a vital role, and then the things which the enemy took the most trouble to desecrate and destroy become the cherished things; "The stone which the builder rejected becomes the chief cornerstone."

So French Jewry now appeals to us for *sifre torah* to refill the empty and broken Arks of the synagogues and for books to refill the empty shelves in the devastated libraries. This is a call which American Jews should answer with a full and grateful heart. Most synagogues own more than the minimum number of *sifre torah* necessary for services. If each of them contributes one *sefer* to the Jews of France, their only loss will be that they carry one scroll less during the *hakafot* on *Simhat Torah*. By way of compensation, they will have the satisfaction of knowing that the missing Scroll has not been lost but is serving to exalt the mind and purify the heart of another congregation three thousands miles or more away. The Joint Distribution Committee is assuming responsibility for sending the books and the *sifre torah* where they are needed. We urge our readers to contact it for the necessary information.

"FREE PORT" OR HOMELAND?

"ANY port in a storm" is, under ordinary circumstances, a good commonsense principle. But there are times and conditions under which to put in at "any port" becomes a leap from the frying pan into the fire. We consider the resolution favoring the establishment of "free ports" for Jewish refugees in Palestine, which was recently introduced into the House of Representatives by Congressman Thomas J. Lane of Mass., as just such a dangerous and ill-advised move.

The good intentions of the author of the resolution are unquestionable. If the United States can set up a "free port," as it has done, that provides temporary shelter for refugees, why not establish more of such havens in closer proximity to the cauldron from which Jews must flee to escape slaughter? Palestine is near at hand, and Congressman Lane and the supporters of his resolution can point out, as additional advantages offered by their plan, the historic Jewish connection

with Palestine and the hospitable reception the refugees could expect from the resident Jewish community.

Firmly to discountenance and reject the well-intentioned offer must appear, in the face of the desperate situation of the refugees, nothing short of stark ingratitude. It may even expose the opponents of the resolution to the charge of a shocking callousness. But that charge would not be justified. For it is precisely because the heartrending refugee problem troubles us, as it must every Jew, that we cannot accept a temporary palliative which may serve to block the road to a permanent solution.

From our knowledge of the situation at the moment, the lack of countries of refuge in no wise militates against the actual rescue of Jews trapped in Nazi-occupied Europe. The ownership of a visa (and even citizenship in a foreign country, Paraguay, for example) does not exempt a European Jew in the hands of the Nazis from extermination. Rescue comes either from within, by Jews' managing to hide or escape, or from without, through the armies of liberation. "Free ports," whether in Oswego or Palestine, are definitely not means of rescue. They can necessarily serve only those who have made good their escape or, as in the case of the "free port" at Oswego, those who were previously rescued by the advance of the armies of the United Nations. Transferring Jews from liberated countries to a "free port" may bring the refugees—and that only temporarily—better living conditions. But for the ultimate problem of where and how the refugee is to live, it merely postpones the issue; it offers no solution.

Where the establishment of a "free port" endangers a final and permanent solution of the refugee problem, it must be resolutely opposed. That is true of the plan proposed in the Lane Resolution. For the Jews to accept "free ports" in Palestine would be tantamount to their abandoning the whole basis of the Jewish claim to Palestine. A Jew entering one of these havens would then be declaring, in effect, that he enters Palestine not as of right but on sufferance. A Jewish refugee may well come to the United States, Libya or any other place in the world except Palestine on sufferance; to Palestine he must come as of right, or else our Zionist hope is doomed.

Recently, a British official agent of the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees, Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith, addressed groups of Jewish refugees in liberated Italy on the question of their migration. "Send me where you like," an old woman said in reply to his query, "but send me where I can find some peace." Just so. What peace of mind can that woman or any refugee have in a Palestine "free port" if Palestine is to be just another wayside station on the road that stretches on agonizingly without end? Palestine must be home at last for the wanderers; as a "free port," it becomes a grim taunt.

REALITIES AND VALUES

THE BRAND OF FASCISM against which Americans will have to be on their guard after the war will not flaunt a "made in Germany" label. It will be a native American brand advocated by super-patriots. Native fascist groups will be recognizable by their tendency to identify themselves and their kind with the nation as a whole and to label—and libel—all other groups as un-American. Such being the case, Americans should keep a sharp look-out on such organizations as the American Legion. Some weeks ago, the American Legion Post of Hood River, Oregon, had the effrontery to efface from a service plaque at the courthouse the names of sixteen Japanese-American soldiers. Letters from two

Methodist churchmen, the Rev. W. Sherman Burgoyne and Frank H. Smith protested in the press against this shameful act, and the Hood River Ministerial Association pronounced it, in a resolution, "unfair" and "un-American." It is now planned to replace the American Legion plaque with a county-sponsored war honor roll. Hats off to the alert democracy of Hood River!

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IN LINE WITH ITS NARROW nationalism, the American Legion has also put itself on record not only as opposing liberalization of American immigration laws but as advocating further restriction of immigration. Its policy on immigration is embodied in bills sponsored in the House by Representative A. Leonard Allen of Louisiana and Representative Stephen Pace of Georgia. These would suspend all immigration into the United States from the end of the present war until the number of unemployed persons in the United States is less than one million. Since, even in prosperous years, there are usually more than a million men unemployed at any given time, the intention of the bills is to put an end to immigration altogether. Their motivation is the xenophobia that stamps all "furriners" as undesirable. From another source than the American Legion we get quite a different opinion of the effect of refugee immigration on American life than is implied in these pending bills. A letter addressed to Charles A. Riegelman, President of the National Refugee Service, declares that "satisfying adjustments made by many refugees . . . are an encouraging demonstration of the essential soundness of our policy of asylum to those oppressed for reasons of race, religion or political belief." The letter adds that "among them are many who have joined our armed forces, and many scholars, scientists and professional people who have made substantial contributions to the war effort." The author of the letter is Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

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THE HOME MISSION COUNCIL of North America recently received a report from its Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews which claims that 100,000 Jews are members of Christian Churches in the United States and Canada. This is a disturbing situation. The Jewish people needs all the man-power that is left to it after having lost millions of men, women and children at the hands of the Nazi butchers; it can ill afford the loss of additional hundreds of thousands throughout the world via the baptismal fount. Some Jews may be disposed to belittle the significance of our losses through conversion, on the theory that such defections merely remove the disloyal from our midst and make it easier for the rest of the Jewish community to survive and thrive. We are not so optimistic. When one considers the difficult psychological and social readjustment involved in renouncing one's ancestral faith and community, it is alarming to note how many Jews have nevertheless found it desirable to slough off their Judaism. This is evidence of low Jewish morale; it means that great numbers of Jews—many times the number of those willing to go to the extreme of renouncing Judaism altogether—must find nothing in it to compensate them for the insecurity and frustrations which they experience as members of a maligned and harassed minority group. That is why we need to reconstruct and revitalize Judaism; we must give Jews something to live for in the modern world.

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WE ARE HAPPY TO NOTE THAT the long standing differences between Avukah and the Zionist Youth Commission have been composed to the apparent satisfaction of all concerned. Avukah, a

(*Continued on Page* 21)

Reconstructing Bar Mitzvah

By ABRAHAM SEGAL

THE Bar Mitzvah, a religious ceremony which has a strong hold on the imagination of American Jews, is one which the Jewish school has, from an educational point of view, almost completely neglected. The educational possibilities of the ceremony are great. Usually the parents are cooperative, the boy is eager, and the congregation and the community are interested. Besides, the ceremony itself has, educationally, socially, and emotionally, a wide range of influence.

Because of these possibilities, the school and the synagogue possess tremendous power through their control of the Bar Mitzvah. This power is usually exerted negatively, by imposing financial (and less often educational) requirements to be met before the ceremony is permitted. This power is seldom exerted positively by controlling all the possibilities of the ceremony to guide the boy and his parents toward a better appreciation of Jewish values.

A few hundred years ago, the Bar Mitzvah ceremony was quite simple, without special preparations or fuss of any kind. It had, however, a valid social function, for it represented changes that took place in the lives of the boy and his parents. It thus symbolized problems and solutions to problems which had real meaning in the life of the people.

The Need for Reconstructing Bar Mitzvah

Today, pomp and circumstance have replaced the old simplicity and honesty, and showmanship has replaced achievement. Whatever may be true of his physical development, the thirteen-year-old of today is far from maturity in vocational preparation, in education, in emotional experience. The modern parent, not having felt much responsibility for his son's sins or his own, feels no real relief at Bar Mitzvah from such responsibility, and the boy feels no new sense of responsibility. Whatever changes take place in the boy's life at Bar Mitzvah generally take the direction of a weakening of his ties to Judaism and to Jewishness: he is permitted now to give up his Jewish studies; he feels that he is now, by virtue of a ritual act, a "complete" Jew; he feels that the whole task of the Jewish parent, the Jewish child, and the Jewish school has now been satisfactorily accomplished.

Modern life is so complicated that practically nobody can grow to maturity in twelve or thirteen years. There is so much to learn and so much to do that the modern boy must either be allowed more time to become mature, or else he must be expected, within the same time, to reach a far lower level of maturity. We have retained the traditional number of years as a requirement for Bar Mitzvah, although at that age the boy is only half-way grown up, and we have retained, together with the traditional age requirement, also the traditional conventions and terminology, whereby we talk and think in terms of a maturity which does not exist. We have today, therefore, a ceremony, splendid in its outer shell, but inwardly hollow and false.

Jewish educators cannot continue to endorse, even by silence, a ceremony which represents changes that have *not* taken place and achievements which have *not* been attained. Such endorsement means the loss of self-respect both for ourselves as individuals and for the Jews as a people. Deliberate reconstruc-

tion of hypocrisy into honesty is a difficult if not impossible task, but how shall we find out whether it is possible or not, unless we try? The effort must be made to influence the children and their parents who come to the Jewish school, so as to make them ashamed of the worst and proud of the best that Jewishness has to offer.

What Bar Mitzvah Should Mean for Our Day

There must be a new Bar Mitzvah ceremony, with constructive educational, social, and religious meaning. It must have valid social functions, and therefore be honest, and it must be part of the school's program of Jewish education. It must represent changes actually taking place, and symbolize real problems and real solutions. It must emphasize accomplishment, not performance. It must include an expression of the boy's attitude to his Jewish future, as well as to his Jewish past. It must bind the boy closer to school, congregation and community, not free him from them. It must lead to growth in these institutions, not to their decline. The ceremony must positively mean further Jewish study, further Jewish responsibility, further Jewish opportunity. It must lead to respect for self, for parents, for Jewish teachers, and for Jewish life. The new Bar Mitzvah will have little to do with a mythical adulthood or with little-valued religious privileges. Instead, it will embody concepts with which the boy can find himself completely at home and which will, at the same time, promote the best Jewish attitudes. *The new Bar Mitzvah ceremony must signify* (1) *the public expression of allegiance to Jewish life, and* (2) *the realization that there is no other way to keep this promsie of allegiance than through further Jewish study.* At his age, and with his education, the boy is not expected to assume any new economic or social responsibilities, and the religious privilege of being counted as a member of the *minyan* will not satisfy the needs of the modern American Jewish community. The Bar Mitzvah boy's role is further prepartion, further schooling, simply that and nothing more.

These concepts are not new nor revolutionary, but rather revive the essential ideals of the past. Let us sweep away the untenable changes we have made in the traditional Bar Mitzvah, and boldly proclaim that a boy who does not intend to continue his Jewish study cannot become Bar Mitzvah, as that is the one and only purpose of the ceremony appropriate to his stage of development.

Both the concept of allegiance and the concept of further study are within the mental and emotional grasp of a twelve-year-old. To avoid the confusion and hypocrisy resulting from non-valid concepts of adulthood and ritual qualification, the child at Bar Mitzvah should deal with simple and sound ideas, ideas which are already part of his daily experience. These concepts, if embodied in the ceremony and acted upon by the boy, lead to the most desirable results. The *only* activity justified by such concepts is further serious Jewish study, whereas the traditional meaning of Bar Mitzvah encourages the boy in feeling qualified henceforth to live his own life as a Jew in accordance with his own uninformed judgment.

The rub, of course, is in trying to get a new attitude to Bar Mitzvah officially adopted. No hard-headed synagogue official would accept probable and permanent future benefits to Judaism as compensation for immediate financial loss through antagonizing the family of the Bar Mitzvah. For the mass of Jewish teachers and parents, deliberate reconstruction of hypocrisy into honesty is ad-

mittedly a difficult task. But one teacher, strongly and sincerely crying out against Bar Mitzvah as they now are, may be enough to influence the reactions to Judaism of several pupils. If a principal or rabbi were to bring into open controversy the conflict between his private opinions and his public acts, perhaps several parents might learn a new view of Jewish education. If the vicious circle is to be broken, someone must break it, and once broken it is no longer whole. Someone must place on the defensive the present purveyors of Bar Mitzvah on a cash-and-carry basis. Someone must stand up to parents who "don't want" their sons "to be rabbis," who demand the use of the synagogue building though they have no use for the synagogue as an institution, or who treat the Bar Mitzvah as a ritual act sufficient in itself to release them from the obligation to raise their children as good Jews. Someone must go to work on the children, to give them a wholesome attitude to their Jewish heritage.

Some Methods for Reconstructing The Bar Mitzvah

No matter how successful or unsuccessful the effort to convert officials and parents, there are many things that principals and rabbis can do within the school program, even if the new Bar Mitzvah is not universally accepted. Many of the following procedures have already been tried in various places, often with real improvement in the Bar Mitzvah situation. Any procedure, of course, is subject to variation to fit local needs and conditions. Even a few of the proposed methods, if not all are within reach, may help make the work more honest and more effective.

1. If possible, the school through its officials — rabbi, principal, school committee—should have both the responsibility for Bar Mitzvah training and the control over its requirements. The specific requirements as to length of stay in school, knowledge mastered, and so on, do not matter so much as that the Bar Mitzvah should be officially and actually a school affair. The school officials should work unceasingly to attain as much of this power as they can.

2. In any case, Bar Mitzvah instruction should begin as early in the school program as possible, preferably in the very first grade, where children could learn the melodies of the *trop* just as easily as they learn everything else. Whatever the boy is expected to know at his Bar Mitzvah should be divided over several years of his stay in school, suitably graded, of course, according to age level. Ideally, when he reaches the age of twelve-and-a-half and has been in school several years, he should have learned in class all the required Bar Mitzvah skills, and need only some final polishing on his individual problems. There ought to be no special Bar Mitzvah teacher or Bar Mitzvah class; becoming Bar Mitzvah should be the consummation of a long period of Jewish education, rather than a ritual for which one can be prepared within a few months. The ideal kind of Bar Mitzvah instruction requires that every Jewish teacher be able to teach the requisite skills, and that provision be made in the course of study for acquring these skills gradually over a period of years. Neither requirement is difficult, or beyond reason.

3. It follows that the school should endeavor to enroll children at the earliest possible age, so as to have them as pupils for the longest possible time before Bar Mitzvah. Methods of lowering the enrollment age are many, but beyond the scope of this paper. It is important that the Bar Mitzvah boy shall have had at least

four or five years of schooling, both in order to make it more likely that he will continue at school, and also to ensure him the soundest possible elementary training if he should leave school.

4. The evils of the present Bar Mitzvah ceremony must be made the subject of open and powerful attack by every teacher in every class at regular intervals, and by the principal and the rabbi at assemblies and services. Furthermore, the new meaning of Bar Mitzvah must be upheld. Literature must be sent out, programs created, posters designed, forums conducted, and the entire prestige of the synagogue must, through a battery of propaganda devices, be thrown behind an all-out drive for the new Bar Mitzvah.

5. The goals of completing Hebrew school, of being graduated, of going on into high school or Confirmation classes, must always be held before all the children. They must be often reminded of the increasing enrollments in adult classes, and shown how this trend indicates that many grown-ups regret their earlier neglect of Jewish education. Bar Mitzvah boys who have remained in school must be constantly brought to the attention of the other children through a variety of devices. Flattery and obsequiousness are to be avoided, but these post-Bar Mitzzah boys should be given special privileges, special honors, special insignia, special social functions, special clubs, special courses of instruction, and frequent publicity and praise. Above all, the classroom teacher must impress his pupils with the real purposes of the school.

6. In order to distinguish the post-Bar Mitzvah boys, it is first necessary to retain them in the school. Toward this end every effort should be bent. Classroom teaching should be lively and vigorous, and pupils must feel definite progress in scholastic achievement. Parents must be written to, interviewed privately, lectured to at meetings. Boys should be required to declare their intentions, and so should their parents. No parent should be allowed to save money on tuition or membership fees by withdrawing his child from the school at Bar Mitzvah. Through advance payments, or through other appropriate means, the parent must learn that it is no cheaper for the child to quit than to continue. It may even be possible to charge an extra Bar Mitzvah fee, which is returnable at the end of the year if the boy has continued attending classes; or to establish lower fees for post-Bar Mitzvah pupils; or to introduce any other financial differential to penalize withdrawal and encourage continuance.

The boy himself may be asked to take a pledge, oral or written, to go on with his studies, and may be rewarded in some way if he does. Much can be done in individual cases, if teachers, principals, and rabbis will take the trouble to study the boy and try to provide in his pre-Bar Mitzvah program some activity of great interest and appeal to him, which he can be stimulated to pursue after the ceremony. Clubs, special school tasks and offices, hobbies, and special individual subjects of study, are possible devices.

After Bar Mitzvah, if the boy drops out, efforts may be made to interview him and his parents and to persuade him to return; but in most cases such efforts will not avail. Such a boy should, however, understand that he will not, simply by virtue of growing older, be admitted later on to a high school, Confirmation, or extension class if he drops out now; and if the school can so far control the situation, the boy should also be forbidden membership in other youth organizations of the synagogue, whatever they may be. If such prohibitions are in force, pre-Bar Mitzvah boys should understand them clearly. In short, every possible sanction, every possible pressure,

every possible financial and psychological device, should be utilized to keep boys in school. It is well known that they themselves, years later, will be most grateful for it.

The possibilities are surprising. In one school, for example, which enjoyed virtually no control whatever over Bar Mitzvah qualifications, and therefore could employ only the very mildest of pressures, the retention of Bar Mitzvah boys rose from nearly zero to 50 per cent in two years, and to 70 per cent in three years. Many boys who remain after Bar Mitzvah, it is true, drop out later on; this is a further problem for school officials to work on.

7. The ceremony in the synagogue should receive the special attention of the school with these purposes in mind: (a) to make the ceremony mean what the school wants it to mean; (b) to make it a lesson to younger children in proper attitudes; and (c) to aid in bringing the boy back to the school. Naturally, much depends on the local school and synagogue conditions. If there is a Junior Congregation, it can readily be used for all three purposes. The boy may make his pledge to the Junior Congregation just before the actual ceremony. The Junior Congregation, or its selected delegates, may join the adult services in a body to honor the Bar Mitzvah of a boy who has pledged himself to go on with Jewish education. In one congregation, during the Rabbi's address to the boy, every other post-Bar Mitzvah boy in the synagogue rises, and the Rabbi in his talk emphasizes the symbolism of this act. The Rabbi should also distinguish in his remarks between one boy and another—for instance, between a boy who has pledged himself to return to school and one who has not. A boy who has not attended a Jewish school (if such be permitted to use the synagogue) should receive no recognition or acknowledgment of any kind from the Junior Congregation, the school, or the rabbi. As to the boy who has attended, mention should be made by the rabbi of facts peculiar to him—his Jewish and general studies, his clubs, his own future plans. It would not be amiss for the boy to repeat before the congregation his pledge to stay in the school. The boy's own class and teacher should also take cognizance of his Bar Mitzvah. The teacher should have exerted his talents to interest and attract the boy and to make the new Bar Mitzvah intelligible and desirable to him. After the ceremony, the class may hold a party, giving the boy its own presents and congratulations.

8. Since the new Bar Mitzvah means further Jewish study, the school should provide some new special course or club for post-Bar Mitzvahs. This may be a special class, or a social activity, or a special privilege. Some schools, for instance, have tried a Sunday-morning Tefilin Club (breakfast served) with success. In other schools, the post-Bar Mitzvah may enter evening classes, may enter senior clubs, may hold certain important Junior Congregation honors, and the like. Occasional parties, celebrations, hikes, picnics, visits to other schools, talks by outside speakers, and countless other activities suggest themselves in this connection.

9. The school must at least make an effort to influence the party, which most boys and their parents consider as important ritually as anything else. In place of neglecting this aspect of the ceremony, often one of the most expensive and elaborate aspects of all to the persons concerned, the school should try to educate the boy and his parents months in advance for understanding the new Bar Mitzvah and the proper uses of a party. The parents should learn that the faculty of the school should be invited, and the boy's Hebrew school classmates also, the

party should not any longer be so private an affair. Questions should be asked about the food and about the "entertainment." Parents should be guided (they will be very willing, often, once they are shown the way) in bringing out the *Jewishness* of such an affair. The partaking of the food should be preceded by the appropriate blessings; there are Jewish songs in several languages; there are Jewish dances and games.

Above all, the boy himself should perform some social act of a *Jewish* character — present a gift of his own to the school or to the synagogue, or to a worthy Jewish welfare organization, or to some Palestine agency. He should announce some specific new *Jewish* obligation which he now undertakes — entering a new Jewish class or club, joining a new Jewish organization, subscribing to a Jewish magazine, or the like.

With the boy doing these things, the "speech" would become unnecessary, but if there must be a "speech," let the school control that too. Months in advance, working with a teacher, the principal, or the rabbi, the boy should choose a simple Jewish topic — Sabbath, Palestine, the Synagogue, some great Jew or Jewish book, or some easy lesson from his own portion — and write down his own reactions after considerable discussion. There should be no polishing up of this composition, other than for grammatical correctness. Whatever the subject, the boy can be led to conclude with the essential idea of the new Bar Mitzvah, continuation of Jewish study.

10. The school should make specific Jewish demands on a boy at Bar Mitzvah. Both for his own individual character training, and to invest the occasion with Jewishness, the boy should be made to feel that he owes the school something and must pay his debt. The boy may donate Sabbath sweets to the Junior Congregation, and himself distribute them to his schoolmates; he may contribute books to the school library; or he may, in the school's name, contribute to some worthy Jewish cause or to some great American cause.

Whatever this contribution is, and whenever it is exacted, it should be made publicly at a school assembly, so as to show younger children desirable Bar Mitzvah traits. Suitable publicity and acknowledgment of the gift should be seen to, and the school in turn should make some award — a specially designed pin or ring or certificate, some Jewish art object for the boy's room, a subscription to a Jewish periodical, or something of the sort. The idea here is to make staying in school very desirable because of the joys of giving and getting, and also to give the boy some gift which will frequently remind him of his pledge to the school.

In addition to special honors being bestowed on the post-Bar Mitzvah, special duties must likewise be required of him, though these duties must always combine pleasure and prestige with obligation. What these duties are depends on the activities peculiar to the individual school. Some examples are: serving on a council of post-Bar Mitzvah boys to plan and conduct junior services; acting as office aids and messengers; visiting other schools and other services as delegates; preparing a program for the assembly, for a holiday, or for a parents' meeting; assisting in the coaching of pre-Bar Mitzvah boys, or of poor readers in lower classes. By some such means, at the same time that Bar Mitzvah opens up new honors and privileges, the boy must learn that Bar Mitzvah presents new responsibilities and obligations.

Conclusions

It should be unnecessary to analyze all the foregoing procedures and devices to

show how they work for the ideal Bar Mitzvah which has already been described. In studying them, criticizing them, adapting them, and using them, these ideal standards must always be kept in mind. These procedures, it is hoped, will help bring about a ceremony which has valid social functions, which emphasizes real achievement in place of showmanship, which binds the boy ever closer to his school and congregation instead of freeing him from them, which increases the numbers and the prestige of the school instead of diminishing them, and which instills in the boy admiration and respect for his parents, his teachers, and his people, so that he may respect himself in the highest sense of the term.

In carrying out most of these procedures, the role of the teacher is important. The classroom teacher is the school official closest to the boy, the one who knows him best, the one who can sway him most by daily contact in the course of his Jewish studies. The classroom teacher represents Jewish education to the boy, and insofar as he loves, admires, and respects the teacher, he can be brought to love, admire, and respect the school and its purposes. At the same time, therefore, that the principal or the rabbi plan and execute activities and projects such as have been indicated, let them look carefully to their teaching staff. Shown the way, the teachers can be the making of the school's Bar Mitzvah campaign. Without their enthusiastic support, while much can be done, success will be slow in coming, if it comes at all. The requirements of the teacher are twofold, very difficult and very simple at the same time: he must teach interestingly and successfully the subject matter which is assigned to him; and he must teach, beyond all subject matter, the profound concepts which are indispensable to a satisfying Jewish life. Both requirements are important; neither is to be neglected; both must be the constant daily concern of every classroom teacher.

Seeing clearly the tremendous possibilities in the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, and using it courageously for the best interests of Jewish life, the school executive should plan with his teachers a long-term Bar Mitzvah revolution. This paper was written with a view to laying out the groundwork of such a plan.

A Layman Looks at Religion

By LAWRENCE CROHN

AT FIRST glance at religion is not very satisfying. Anchored in superstition, false beliefs and legends, it is small wonder that the vested interests of the churches have so often been the handmaidens of reaction. The history of religion is replete with epic flights into the realm of the ideal, and the ultimate degradation of such visions by the followers of these dreams and prophecies. But notwithstanding the history of religion's failure to raise up high the stature of man, and notwithstanding the moral breakdown of humanity in the present Armageddon, it nevertheless remains as true as ever that religion is man's highest aspiration and need. This will perhaps be better understood by a common sense analysis of religion from the layman's point of view.

Religion Man-Made

We have been under the influence of a misconception about religion. We have always assumed that Divine Revelation is

the basis of all creeds and that hence the truths of religion are not man-made, but are handed down from Mt. Sinai or Calvary. The authenticity of revealed religion has been subjected to scientific scrutiny and we see now, clearly enough, that prophetic utterances and "revealed" laws were concerned with flesh and blood conditions of the periods in which they made their appearance. It is no disrespect for the character of the prophets to perceive that their teachings were but the fruition of many centuries of religiour development of Judea.

If we divest our minds of outmoded religious ideas, we shall more readily understand that religion, as a universal human urge, can be justified only when viewed as reflecting the rise and fall of human development through the ages. Just as civilization itself cannot be thought of as something that is handed down from on high, complete and ready to use, but rather as a process which is advanced by ordinary men and women, so we must learn to think of religion as a high aspect of civilization, its most potent ingredient, which rises and falls with the historic surges and retrogressions of the human race.

For the purposes of this discussion we may discount the idols and the creeds as so much antiquated paraphernalia and view the larger aspects of religion. We shall find that people get the kind of religion they want and deserve. If the saints are too saintly, they will be made into clay deities by the people, and just as often, very human prophets will be deified by their over-zealous followers. Like music, art, and politics, religion also, in an over-all sense, may be expected to mirror the spiritual state of the people.

The God Idea Still Indispensable

We shall presently offer a more detailed analysis of the view that the idea of religion evolves, and, like all human values, will be only as noble as its adherents, and vice versa. But, before doing so we had better discuss the place of God and the spirtual realm within this pattern. For a religion without a basic philosophy of the universe we live in, is not a religion. We may dispense with out-moded types of revealed religion, the miracles and the super-natural elements, but we can never submit to a narrow mechanistic view of the cosmos. Such a view is untenable and is destructive of all our aspirations for a truly better world.

The intelligent layman of yore reasoned quite simply that, as the mechanism of a watch could not be self-made, so the universe needed a Maker. This was the philosophy of the average man, and the details of his religion were filled in for him by professional preachers. The thinking layman of today is bewildered by the profound changes in scientific thought. The basic constituents of matter itself are no longer conceived as stable, fixed elements. We are confronted with theories which employ mathematical concepts and proofs, but which, to the ordinary layman, seem to make of the universe a grandiose "Alice in Wonderland."

Professor Einstein assures us that we have thus far been able to view the cosmos only, as it were, through a celestial keyhole. The analogy requires further elaboration. What little we may see through a real keyhole is assuredly something out of our own certain experiences. In the vast expanses of the telescopic as well as microscopic ken of the philosopher of present-day physics, with no sure footing in time or space, the amount of information we might get through this cosmic keyhole is next to nothing quantitatively, particularly in terms of ultimate metaphysical truths.

Agnosticism is an alluring viewpoint

for the layman who is faced with this picture. The Newtonian world was at least clear-cut. One could take sides with the theist, or agnostic, or atheist, with a degree of cogent logic on any side. In our four-dimensional world, the very concept of pure objectivity becomes suspect, and the quest for one unifying principle takes on the appearance of the search for the ancient philosopher's stone.

Science seeks the way out of this encirclement by an all-inclusive definition of life and matter. Electricity and matter are thus said to be different aspects of the same reality, and it is suggested that mind is but the human manifestation of electrical energy. Yet, we must bear in mind that the simple atomic theory only a short time back seemed to provide an all-inclusive basis for a completely satisfying philosophy. The substitution of electrical terms, or as some of the new trends now indicate, mere mathematical formulae, in place of atoms and neutrons and electrons, will undoubtedly bring scientific advancement, but in the still fundamental question of what the stuff of Reality is, there appears no promise of greater advances.

And yet the cultured layman can never be content to let the matter rest in the hands of the professional scientists. Man wants to be profoundly adjusted to the whole of life, to live his life as part of some profound universal scheme. Where the greatest minds fear to tread, often the ordinary man ventures to assert an opinion, aye, even an assurance about the nature of Reality. To have no belief is impossible. What passes for unbelief is an affirmation of cosmic chaos. On the other hand, a positive viewpoint, based only on things as we see them, is equally untenable and unreal. Our frame of references is circumscribed by our finite attributes and powers of observation. Wherever we turn, we must grope. But as we thus feel our way, we try to get our direction by relating ourselves to those aspects of life which appear to be most fundamental.

The fathomless cosmos is too much for finite man to make much sense of. True enough, in our small world, scientific advance seems tremendous, and undoubtedly it is. But what the substance of Reality is, will not be determined by test tubes and cosmic ray machines. Granting the limitations of human thought, one conclusive fact, one certainty seems to remain. It is that we may never explain the cosmos strictly in terms of the cosmos itself. We can discern one phenomenon or set of circumstances in relation to other observable situations. We may compound these observations, so to speak, by increasing our knowledge, but the interdependence of everything seems to be the one constant factor. *This and that* are only understood in their relation to another *this and that, ad infinitum.* Thus our thinking turns us in intellectual circles and even the pure scientist now seeks a single uniform principle. Such a formula, if it is to be all-inclusive, must, it seems, not be corporeal in its essence. So it is that men like Jeans and Eddington have become quite non-materialisitc, to the chagrin of some of their colleagues.

Most thinking people will pass on from this stage to more positive assertions. Naturally the old distinctions between natural and supernatural appear naive today. With our limited knowledge we cannot seek too far afield for the ultimate truths. What we determine to believe must have a cogency based upon our own "intuitions." It is quite generally recognized that the nature of the Universe must be sought within ourselves to a far greater extent than was hitherto believed. The external phenomena of matter, time, space, seem less related to the eternal

principles than free will, right or wrong, art and good living. Mere matter is built up and destroyed, so it seems, over and over again. And yet, the Universe, which is so vast and timeless appears to be going somewhere. The processes of forward evolution outdistances the retrospective trends. There is one aspect of religious behavior which is common to all religious people and that is their faith in the dependability of the Universe, a faith which refuses to believe in permanent failure of either the physical or spiritual nature of man or his Universe. Surely, this is not a blind faith, in view of either the newer trends in science and philosophy, or of the advanced intuitions of the modern man.

The Spiritual Character of Man As Basis of Faith in God

Our human limitations do force us to accept theories as our guide posts. This fashion was set long ago by the scientific world. In formulating our fundamental theory, however, we must have supporting data, if, by reason of the nature of the problem, ordinary facts are irrelevant. So it is that we turn to our inner motivations, to the so-called spiritual character of man. In ourselves we find potent forces which are capable of vast development. Our faith in the dependability of the Universe must be based more and more upon our own living, which more than all else, does determine the fundamental character of life. In ourselves we find the same forces of destruction and creation which we observe in the outer world. The two are really inseparable. And from the vantage point of our own psyche we are led eventually, toward the postulate of God.

The omnipotent God of the ancients, or of ancient-minded moderns, is far removed from the theories here presented. In one sense, the term God may today be inadequate. But from earliest historic times, in one way or another, men have prayed to some god, as an expression of their deepest natures. The idea of God is sufficiently inclusive, therefore, to encompass, in its lofty connotations, the feelings and aspirations of all manner of men.

The Role of Religion in Civilization

We must now return to our original thesis, that religion is a product of man's dreams, and hence will rise or fall to the level of human conduct and understanding. Men will forever postulate God in the world, and to support this belief, their ideals and highest desires will be put to the service of the God idea. This is not to say that religion has not been inspired by truth and a certainty of God's reality in the world. Indeed, the concept of God appears to be so necessary that, without it, the very idea of objective certainty is unthinkable. Religion, however, is purely functional; it is our human endeavor to put to the service of men and women the idea of God and its profound implications.

Since men act collectively, there will arise leaders, inspired visionaries, to proclaim God's truths. Their visions will take hold of men and women who will accept their pronouncements. Unfortunately, the history of mankind abounds in examples of prophetic teachings which, as understood and applied by men, quickly degenerate to the level of the believing masses. Apostles and priests are ever-ready to crystallize teaching into dogma and to stain the pristine glory of Mt. Sinai or Gethsemane.

A seemingly contradictory process is set in motion. From the loins of the people, out of conditions that foster new leadership, arise a Moses, a Jesus, a Mohammed. A new religion succeeds in uplifting the people, but that faith must in the end be limited in scope by the

moral and spiritual status of its adherents. Civilization itself follows the same pattern. Leadership is the product of circumstances, but its hold upon society is limited likewise by the stage of civilization at a given time.

Great churches are built up which claim to embody basic teachings. Historic events, places and names come to bear special sanctified meanings. Saints and holy places, festivals and fasts are the working tools of religion. Beliefs become congealed into basic church doctrine. The extent of this crystallization is determined by the gullibility of the flocks. It is a vicious cycle begun with prophetic exaltation, and thereafter quickly debased to the level and capacity of ordinary men and women. True enough, there have been ages of great spiritual exhilaration. Men seemed to be ready for great goals. But hopes have run high for short periods, only to be dashed against the rocks of man's common estate.

Taking Stock of Religion

We must therefore take stock of religion on the basis of the unvarnished truth about its real position. Four fundamental observations and conclusions may be deduced from this discussion of the modern religious problem.

1. Man seeks to fathom the mystery of life and posits a spiritual formula which centralizes all existence around a Unifying Force. From the structure of the cosmos and of his own being, he deduces that matter and life are not self-operating and hence he postulates God. To different people this deity will be a personal God or perhaps no more than a mystic and unknowable Power beyond the frontiers of human knowledge. It is well known that the conception of God has undergone radical changes since men worshiped stones. From the idolatry of the heathen, to the henotheism of Moses, the monotheism of Micah and the subsequent refinements and debasements of the God-concept, this has been an evolving theological viewpoint. To most thinking men, the idea of God as a Force is more acceptable than the idea of Him as a Being. But in the final analysis, every intelligent person will want to arrive at his own theological conclusion. It is largely a subjective process.

2. Religion is not supernaturally revealed. We need not depend upon Scriptures, however lofty, for our knowledge of life. Religion is a developing way of life, a powerful impulse which creates churches and theological systems to satisfy this craving. The Scriptures are the highlights in our spiritual travels down the avenue of Time. Into our religious systems we deposit our Ten Commandments and Apostles' Creeds as landmarks of our inner struggles. Although religion should be a deeply edifying force, we should not be surprised at its frequent failure. Since man himself makes his own creeds, we cannot expect religions to travel any faster than the capacity for growth of the peoples of the world. We shall have to differentiate between external piety and true religious behavior. If religion is man's loftiest conception, we may be sure that his lower desires will wage against it a constant battle for supremacy. Thus we can understand how religion remains a long-range ideal, largely unfulfilled. It is a method of living propelled by a certainty of life's evolution toward God, and made beautiful by the knowledge of this faith.

3. The modern man will need to take his church or religious group seriously. Into it he will have to put his best endeavors and not leave matters to professional theologians. On their part, the ministers will have to do more real thinking, to adjust creeds and ceremonies and

ancient beliefs to present-day needs. The ideals and the time-honored symbols of the Jewish and Christian faiths need not be altered in order to reconstruct them in our time. The boldness of the scientist is recommended to the present-day theologian. The power and function of prayer will need study and new interpretation.

4. And lastly, all this must be brought down to the level of ordinary men and women. By its very nature, religion must seek to be life's most compelling and activating motive. Religion and party politics may not easily mix, but insofar as government touches all phases of daily life, religion will also in turn affect politics. The "high life" of religion must be translated ino the "good life" of man. Piety in action will be more important than piety in ritual.

Conclusion

We have outlined a modern religious view which can embrace many peoples and different creeds. Each religion will have its own traditions to reconstruct. Some religions, like the Jewish, will continue to express their aspirations through a national group, while Christianity will center its ideals around the character of Jesus. The failures of religion in the past are evidences of man's slow growth and should spur religionists to re-examine the tenets and practices of their faiths.

If religion is to continue as a prime motivating force of civilization, which is its insistent claim, the leadership of the religious communions will require radical overhauling. The value of religion will ever be two-fold. It must, in the first place, give courage and hope and understanding to men and women. Prayer and ceremonies may continue to uplift us, at least those prayers and ceremonies that retain their meaning. But religion, in addition, must embrace our lives completely. In the past some people became ascetics, but now the power of religion must be directed toward the every-day experiences of all manner of persons. In practice we shall expect to see religion lined up with forward-looking liberalism in government, science and the arts. One-day-a-week religion is sheer mockery. Either religion does move on to great heights or it is a failure. We need not expect perfection. An other-worldly mood is a defeatist attitude. But where men do profess their faith, we shall have to expect real spirituality.

Unless we are prepared to restudy religion along these lines, we are likely to witness its decline among intellectual people. And in the long run nearly all will follow the lead of the thinking minority. After the war, there will be a thirsting for a richer and better life for all, and religion must grasp the opportunity to be in the vanguard. Will men who profess religion be the leaders in this movement?

REALITIES AND VALUES

(*Continued from Page* 9)

federation of collegiate Zionist societies, had, in recent years, adopted a program which, while it was undeniably Zionistic, included certain principles not acceptable to all Zionist college students. Attempts by the Zionist Youth Commission to get Avukah to change its platform were resented as an encroachment on its organizational autonomy and a discouragement of its initiative and sense of responsibility. The agreement arrived at leaves Avukah free to formulate its own Zionist position; at the same time it provides for the establishment of a more comprehensive Intercollegiate Zionist League which will include, in addition to Avukah, other collegiate Zionist groups which dissent from its platform. It is well that a solution has been reached, for there is need for a vigorous and effective presentation of Zionism on every college campus.

Book Notes

THREE RECENT NOVELS

EARTH AND HIGH HEAVEN, by Gwenthalyne Graham. J. B. Lippincott Co., N. Y. 1944 *pp.* 288.

BROOK WILLOW, by Nelia Gardner White, The Macmillan Co., N. Y. 1944, *pp.* 276.

OUT OF THESE ROOTS, by Boris Todrin. The Caxtin Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1944, *pp.* 373.

ALTHOUGH only one of the three novels under consideration was written by a Jew, all three treat of the adjustment of the Jew in the modern world and imply assimilation or intermarriage as the solution to the Jewish problem. All three authors would, in all likelihood, protest that they are writing the story of individual Jews and are not concerned with finding a solution to the Jewish problem. Nevertheless, the implication is inescapable, and the better the book as a novel, the more forceful seems to be its message.

I

Miss Graham attacks her theme directly and forthrightly. "One of the questions they were sometimes asked was where and how they had met, for Marc Reiser was a Jew, originally from a small town in northern Ontario, and from 1933 until he went overseas in September, 1942, a junior partner in the law firm of Maresch and Aaronson in Montreal, and Erica Drake was a Gentile, one of the Westmount Drakes." This is the way *Earth and High Heaven* begins. The rest of the book is the story of how Marc and Erica met, how they fell in love, how they were thwarted by families, conventions, prejudices and Marc's Jewish sensitivity, and how finally, daring earth and high heaven, they decide to get married.

Earth and High Heaven is very satisfying as a novel, written with great sensitivity, beauty and understanding. From the point of view of the author, who is non-Jewish, the main theme of the novel is not intermarriage, but anti-Semitic prejudice. During a visit to New York she stated: "My book is not a defense of intermarriage. I am only trying to say that two people who feel, after seriously weighing the personal and social factors involved, that marriage is right for them, should not be subjected to the hampering and heartbreaking interference of society, which habitually indulges in reckless and irresponsible generalizations based on preconceived prejudices against certain groups." In exposing the irrational, deep-rooted anti-Jewish prejudices of the father, Charles Drake, Miss Graham does strike a blow against bigotry and intolerance. In writing sympathetically of Jews and Jewish life she does make a contribution to the promotion of understanding and good will.

But despite Miss Graham's interesting novel, her story will be taken not as an exceptional story of the love and marriage of two individuals of different faiths, but as a pattern of happy adjustment for all. *Earth and High Heaven,* however, ends where the real problem of intermarriage begins — after marriage. At one point Erica and Marc discuss what their children would be like. Marc asserts that of course their children will be brought up as Jews. But to Erica "the idea that if they were mar-

ried, their children would be brought up as Jews had come as a shock, the worst shock Marc had given her so far." In rejoinder she tells him a moment later, that their children would be brought up as both because "whether we like it or not, *we're* both." And this stops him. But it does not take much insight to prophesy that their children will not be Jews. Marc is Jewish only in a negative sense, he has pride and will not give up his Jewishness. But otherwise Jewishness has very little meaning or relation to his life. If Erica's Christianity is as vaporous and tenuous as Marc's Jewishness, their children will become "Canadians" in both the ethnic and religious sense, with Canadian nationalism taking the place of religion. If Christianity means something positive to Erica, the children of Marc and Erica, will become Christians, or will live in a world peopled by other half-Jews and half-Christians.

It is true that some intermarriages have been succesful, and that we ought to treat the marital problems of individuals of different faiths with greater sympathy and understanding. It may be that the marriage of Marc and Erica will be a happy one, but Miss Graham has barely gone into all the intricate and delicate problems involved.

2

Brook Willow is a story of two people, a world-famous pianist, Mary Pelotti, and a psychiatrist, Dr. Jake Blum. Though they meet only at the beginning and at the end of the story, their lives are parallel, their fates are intertwined and interrelated in a deeper sense. The story begins on a foggy night with a policeman discovering a lost woman. She is ugly in a striking way, but her clothes and bearing are distinguished. The policeman calls the psychiatrist, Dr. Jake Blum, who takes her to the city hospital. She insists she is lost because she cannot find Brook Willow. Blum is strangely fascinated by her case. She leaves the next morning but writes him a series of long letters while at home, in which she tells the story of her life as an ugly child prodigy, her frustrations, her thwartings, her arranged marriage to her manager, her unhappiness, and how she found release and peace on a farm called "Brook Willow." In his own life the psychiatrist is equally thwarted and unhappy. There are tensions and jealousies in the hospital, in all of which his Jewishness plays a part. He is pursued by the daughter of his chief at the hospital; he is plagued by his sister's maladjustment, both aggravated by the problem of Jewishness. He too is looking for his Brook Willow. In the end he presumably finds it. He gives up an opportunity to go into partnership with a Gentile psychiatrist who has an excellent practice, and later a chance to become head of the hospital, in order to become a psychiatrist at Green Hills Foundation, a private sanitarium for incurable mental cases. Married to Jo Ann, the daughter of his former chief, and engaged in curing lost souls in this rural retreat, he will presumably find his peace.

As a story, this book too is absorbing and rewarding reading. It is an excellent psychiatric study. But both Blum's analysis of the problem of his Jewishness and his solution are superficial. In this case it may also be due to the fact that the author is a Gentile, who sees the Jewish problem from the point of view of a non-Jew. In one place she has Blum contemplating the success of a cancer specialist, Spangler, and has Blum conclude that the reason for Spangler's satisfactory adjustment is that he never thinks of himself as a Jew. In another place Blum tells his father that the trouble with the Jews

is that they like being scapegoats and cultivate scapegoat's characteristics, and that they insist on separate rights as a group. In still a third place is the author's revealing assertion that "persecution always comes from within."

No one begrudges Blum his discovery of his Brook Willow. Brook Willow is after all an escape, and a denial. Blum gets his peace and release by giving up his Jewishness and by ceasing to struggle. But his real problems too will begin when the book ends. He got his job at Green Hills only because the war created a shortage of doctors. What will happen to his job after the war, when the doctors will return? How will his marriage with Jo Ann turn out? Can he, by simply resigning himself to the situation, suppress his many complexes?

3

Out of These Roots is a first novel by a young author who has already published several books of verse. Though he shows promise both as a poet and as a novelist, *Out of These Roots* is, as a whole, unsuccessful both as a novel and as a treatment of the Jewish question. Without knowing anything about Mr. Todrin's background, I would venture to guess that the novel is largely autobiographical.

The hero of *Out of These Roots* is another tree from Brooklyn, this time a Jewish tree, whose roots go back to Russia. The first part of the book is the story of the parents of the hero, Jewish revolutionaries, who immigrated to America when the revolutionary movement was ruthlessly suppressed. There are fine portraits of the father and the mother, particularly of the mother. This part of the story is overcondensed, from the point of view of the rest of the book. The second part of the story deals with the childhood and adolescence of the hero in East New York, of an adolescent love affair which ends in cohabitation prior to marriage, then early marriage and finally in dissolution of the marriage. The last part deals with the college life of the hero at Columbia, his emergence and development as a poet, his "crush" or admiration for Christopher Coventry, (a thin disguise for Edwin Arlington Robinson), and the help he gets from him in pursuance of his academic and poetic career.

What Todrin tells us is how he became a man and a poet. Though he writes sympathetically of the social justice of the prophets and of the radical Jewish environment in which he was reared, his Jewish roots seem to have had little effect on his life or choice of career. His chief object is to become a poet, to succeed in an alien world.

Out of These Roots is naive, romantic, not well integrated. The mother's frustrated career as actress, her sensitivity, her "free love" and other attitudes to life and love, imbibed from her revolutionary days, undoubtedly influence the love life of the hero and his choice of career, and in this sense, the hero-author as man and poet came "out of these roots." But the Jewish element is largely accidental. It seems to play no part in the emergent life of the young poet and to give him no sustenance. He looks back on his Jewish roots and acknowledges them only to forget them. Unlike Ruth, he will take root in the alien corn, and look up to the new skies above for his solution.

It is good to see non-Jewish authors deal with Jews and Jewish questions sympathetically, even though their counsel is negative. It is sad to see still another Jewish writer "under forty" look back at his roots and find himself baffled as to what meaning they can have for him.

SAMUEL DININ.